



Seeing through  
the artifice of  
adult world

Image: Ruben Bolling

# Ray X

*X-Rayer* #126

31 October, 2016 (C) Ray X

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## Lloyd Penney: A Letterhack's Life

So how did Lloyd Penney become a prodigious letterhack generating up to 30 LOCs (letters of comment) a month, his name becoming a fanzine omnipresence?

In 1997 Lloyd was living in Victoria, British Columbia when he discovered a local Star Trek Club. His membership gave him a taste for science fiction fandom's social conditions.

Lloyd: "I wanted to be a part of things, and I wanted to learn about this hobby/way of life. I was very much a loner as a kid, and I wanted to change that."

He was a loner because he skipped a year in early in his schooling, finding himself among peers not his age. He was physically smaller than the other kids, another reason why he didn't fit in. No one wanted to associate with him. With nothing in common with his peers he had to create his own entertainment.

His interest in science fiction led to reaching out to others through writing to SF fanzines. Friends told him letter columns were the heart of fandom.

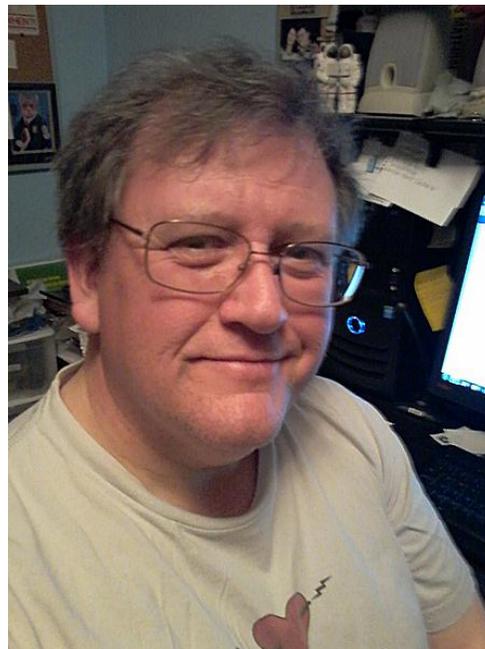
Lloyd: "Responding to as many fanzines as I can gives me as many contacts as I can get. I also wanted to be in the heart of things. I can look back and say that I have won my share of letterwriting awards, but I do have my doubts about being in the heart of things in the lettercolumn."

He moved to Toronto, enrolling in an university to pursue a journalism degree. He wanted to express himself while making a living in journalism. Despite earning a BAA degree a journalistic career didn't work out for him so he continued with his interest in SF fandom, meeting more people in fan publishing. He became involved in publishing the local APA (amateur press association) zine.

Lloyd: "While I was enjoying getting an apazine published, I guess I thought a larger audience would be better for me, so I left APAs to join fanzine fandom."

He started slowly, learning how to write a good LOC along the way.

Lloyd: "I found different ways of responding, of using the language, and I think my writing style is more conversational, maybe more flowery. I try to vary my style, but I often find that my writing will resemble the style of the faned I am responding to. I have always tried to insert some personal journalism into my letters. In some ways, I don't need a blog; if you want to learn what's going on in my life, read my LOCs."



He has won the FAAn Award five times for Best Letterhack.

Lloyd: "The reaction to my winning was jubilation here, but I found the reaction from others in fanzine fandom to be mixed. Some were congratulatory, others did not react at all, and some outright objected. Perhaps I wasn't part of their group, perhaps they thought I should not have won, and I did get a few outright hostile e-mails."

In some cases Lloyd was still the loner. But he pressed on.

Lloyd: "I look back at it all, and hope that I won because of the quality of my writing, but some thought it was quantity of LOCs."

After decades of letterhacking Lloyd is considering reducing his output.

Lloyd: "I have enjoyed writing for fanzines, having been in the letter column for about 35 years now. However, I am perhaps getting a little tired of it all, and of getting little if any appreciation for doing so. I have promised myself that I will slowly reduce the number of fanzines I respond to. I would like to be around when all the zines come crashing down, leaving only memories, and I think that time is not far away. Until it arrives, I will continue to talk to my friends via the local."

## **Creator As Destroyer**

*REVIEW: The X-Files - The Event Series (Season 10)*

George Lucas was criticized by some for wrecking Star Wars when he made the prequel trilogy. Everything he had built up in the first trilogy collapsed.

Chris Carter, meet George Lucas.

Chris tried to continue his X-Files TV series as a theatrical movies series. The last one was disappointing: X-Files - I Want A Refund.

So back to the small screen.

The first season of the X-Files started off with a relatively simple premise: evil aliens are working with the US government. Then as the series continued Chris kept adding to his "mythology," adding more details until it was too convoluted to explain even to some fans. He was like a crazed house builder, adding on new extensions and wings that sometimes connected back to each other, creating not a home but a maze.

Thirteen years later Chris brings back his creation as a six episode mini-series. As with each season of the original series he bookends the latest run, the first episode introducing a new revelation and the last one ending up with a cliffhanger.

Even Chris has said the X-F mythology grew spontaneously, no master plan, resulting in an entangled mess. Black oil, alien bounty hunters, alien rebels, disease-carrying bees -- the list goes on ad nauseam. If the series had started more recently it would somehow throw in the ice bucket challenge.

It seems Chris wanted to go back to a simpler set-up with the first episode of Season 10. Fox Mulder learns that everything he thought he knew about the alien invasion is wrong; the whole thing is a governmental hoax.

Sound familiar? This same plotline was used in Season 5's first two episodes, Redux 1 and 2.

Chris has stated that with the latest season he wasn't bound to everything that went on before. Apparently he wanted a simpler set up. Ergo black oil, alien bounty hunters, etc. were flushed down a black hole.

So the conspiracy is now more earthbound, humans not aliens are the villains.

Ho hum.

Somehow Mulder and his partner -- former redhead Dana Scully -- are re-instated in the FBI, the X-Files reopened. Sorry, that's too convenient and implausible considering Mulder's previous shenanigans. It would be more believable if he continued with his own X-Files, sometimes being an consultant to the FBI.

Somehow the lead villain, the Cigarette Smoking Man, is back. Huh? The last time we saw him was enveloped in flames. There would nothing left but a carbon smudge. Maybe he went to hell but Satan kicked him out for violating the no smoking policy.

The mini-series reintroduces the concept of alien DNA present in humans but the concept is tweaked again. Also there's the return of the global plot to wipe out most of mankind with disease while the elite survive. Last episode in Season 10, the cliffhanger: disease is rampant, the world is in chaos, Mulder is infected and dying. His partner Scully is trying to save him but she's startled to see an alien space craft hovering overhead, apparently showing up to abduct her. Again.

Ho-hum.

I think Chris should have followed DC Comics' example and hit the reboot button, destroying the entire universe to start anew.

Not all is lost with Season 10. If you enjoyed the comedic episodes of the X-Files then "Mulder and Scully Meet the Were-Monster" is recommended. Not as great as "Jose Chung's From Outer Space" but fairly close.

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